

A Kingly Kingdom

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- [0 : 0 0] Our first reading is from Daniel 7 verses 9 to 18 and that's page 900 in the Church Bibles. As I looked, thrones were placed and the Ancient of Days took his seat.
- His clothing was white as snow and the hair on his head like pure wool. His throne was fiery, fiery flames. Its wheels were burning fire.
- A stream of fire issued and came out from before him and thousand thousands served him and ten thousand times ten thousand stood before him.
- The court sat in judgment and the books were opened. I looked then because of the sound of the great words that the horn was speaking and as I looked, the beast was killed and its body destroyed and given over to be burned with fire.
- As the rest of the beasts, their dominion was taken away, but their lives were prolonged for a season and a time. I saw in the great night visions and behold, with the clouds of heaven, there came one like a son of man.
- [1 : 2 3] And he came to the Ancient of Days and was presented before him. And to him was given dominion and glory and a kingdom that all peoples, nations and languages should serve him.
- His dominion is an everlasting dominion which shall not pass away and his kingdom one that shall not be destroyed. As for me, Daniel, my spirit within me was anxious and the visions of the head alarmed me.
- I approached one of those who stood there and asked him the truth concerning all this. So he told me and made known to me that the interpretation of the things.
- These four great beasts are four kings who shall arise out of the earth, but the saints of the Most High shall receive the kingdom and possess the kingdom forever, forever and ever.
- So our second reading is on page 1007, Matthew chapter 28, page 1007 of the Church Bibles, reading from verse 16.
- [2 : 4 0] So that's page 1007, Matthew 28, reading from verse 16. Now the eleven disciples went to Galilee, to the mountain to which Jesus had directed them.
- And when they saw him, they worshipped him, but some doubted. And Jesus came and said to them, All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me.
- Go, therefore, and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you.
- And behold, I am with you always to the end of the age. Thanks, John.
- As mentioned, my name is Benji. I'm on staff here. Why don't I lead us in a prayer as we start. All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me.
- [3 : 5 5] Father, we thank you that the great climax of scripture, the great climax of human history, has begun and ended in the death and resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ. Father, we thank you that one day every knee will bow and every tongue confess that Jesus is King.

Please show us more of what that might mean for our lives in your kingdom, under your King this morning. Amen. We're a community and a culture, I think, obsessed with freedom.

Now, sometimes we probably miss that because of our wonderful American brothers and sisters in the room. Apologies in advance. You know, when they're like, we're the land of the free, home of the brave, holding that note on the word free in their anthem, just a little bit too long for comfort.

But we are equally as obsessed with freedom. And there's many places we could go to kind of get to grips with that, to get our kind of mind around it. But I think, in particular, the words that we use around choice is very, very interesting.

My body, my choice. The freedom to choose to love who we want to love. Freedom to express ourselves however we choose. Freedom to vote for who we choose. And then I suppose, of course, therefore, we're so free to not vote for them again.

[5 : 11] Freedom to worship or not worship who we choose or don't choose. Freedom of expression. Freedom of speech. Freedom of choice of what car to buy. What supermarket to shop in. Freedom to choose where we spend our money.

On and on and on and on and on and on it goes. Freedom. We're free. Freedom of speech. Well, is the Christian free? Is the Christian free? Or is the Christian under authority?

Is the Christian a slave? Or is the Christian free? Is the Christian a subject? Or the Christian a king or queen? Well, Matthew, in the close of his great gospel account of King Jesus, wants us to know that all of us, regardless of whether or not we're Christians or not, actually, are not free.

We are subjects. Subjects of King Jesus, the Lord of heaven and earth. Now, Matthew has carefully crafted what can basically be described as a kingdom manifesto.

And here, to his first readers, he gives the climax of King Jesus' call on his subjects. In chapter 1, it was promised to us that the king is coming, Emmanuel, God with us.

[6 : 19] And now, Matthew closes his account with those very words from the lips of Jesus himself. Have a look with me at the very final words of this gospel. And behold, Jesus said, I am with you always to the end of the age.

God is with us, Emmanuel, until the end of the age. This leads us to our first point, therefore, the king's kingdom, all authority everywhere.

All authority, the king's kingdom. The close of the gospel begins, verse 16. Now, the eleven disciples went to Galilee, to the mountain to which Jesus had directed them. This is the mountain he directed them to after he said he would be raised from the dead.

And when they saw him, they worshipped him. But some doubt it. Now, it's an appropriate response, isn't it? Worship. But then Jesus gives them a commission with three awls.

Three awls for us this morning. And that's where we're going to be kind of basing our time around. Three awls. Have a look with me from verse 18 to 20. And Jesus came and said to them, All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me.

[7 : 26] Go, therefore, and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, the Son, and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you.

And behold, I am with you always to the end of the age. We're going to take each one of those in turn. The first, verse 18. All authority in heaven and on earth. All authority in heaven and on earth.

That is a breathtaking claim, isn't it? All authority in heaven and on earth, Jesus says, has been given to me. It's mine. Any authority you see, borrowed. All authority in heaven and on earth is mine, says King Jesus.

Now, we're only looking at the close of Matthew's account of this king, but if we were to read the whole of it, we would have seen the authority of this Jesus, King Jesus, stamped on every single page.

We would have seen, when Jesus was born, the heavenly host boom out in praise at the arrival of this king. We would have seen the heavens themselves at Jesus' baptism torn in two, the Spirit descending upon the king, as Isaiah prophesied, and the Father saying, This is my Son, the Son of the King.

[8 : 35] We would have seen his authority over creation, as he stood on the boat, and with a word, silenced the seas. We would have seen his authority over sickness, as with a word, he commands a paralyzed man to get up.

And at the words of Jesus, sinew and bone and synapse obeys, knits itself back together, and the man stands. We would have seen Jesus' utter authority over Satan, as he rebuffs him in the wilderness, where every single other man had failed, as he calls demons out of men and women, and places the forces of evil in bondage.

But most supremely, most gloriously, as we think off the back of Easter, we would have seen the authority of King Jesus, as we beheld the empty tomb.

I want us to imagine, if we had been there 2,000 years ago, in the warm morning of that first Easter day, the breeze on our face, the dust between our toes, we would have seen a hole carved in the rock, and an enormous stone lying to the side, with grave linen folded neatly on a shelf inside.

If we had been there, we would have heard that cry, the tomb is empty, Jesus is not here, he is risen. The blight, the crushing, inescapable evil of death, that power that every single one of us is under, man, woman, and child in this room, and will be under forever, has been shattered, once and for all, at the death of Jesus.

[10 : 11] The tomb, which holds everyone that enters into it, in the darkness of death, has been broken open. The great stone, that sealed it shut, has been rolled to the side, and light, has flooded into the darkness.

Christ the king, has slain death, never to die again. And so of course, with the enemy of death, slain at the feet of Jesus, Jesus declares, all authority, in heaven and on earth, has been given to me.

Jesus is king, king everywhere, at all times. And notice, where Jesus says, this authority resides, in heaven and on earth.

First in heaven, the great forces of Satan, to lie, deceive, and kill, have been forever crushed, in the death of King Jesus. And gloriously, this authority, extends to earth.

Which means therefore, as an implication, I wonder if we kind of spotted this, as the reading was given, that we are never, ever, outside the kingdom, of King Jesus.

[11 : 21] What a comfort that is. What a comfort that is. Imagine, so as we step, into our offices, Christ is Lord here. Into our homes, Christ is Lord.

When we speak to our colleagues, Christ is their Lord. Our children, Christ is their Lord. In other words, there is not a single corner, of this world, not a single atom, in this universe, which does not have stamped, across every part of it, Jesus Christ, is Lord and King.

If you were to take, a telescope, and look into the furthest reaches, of the Milky Way, or even beyond our own galaxy, and millions of light years away, you would see a place, where Jesus Christ, is Lord, and King.

And then if that same day, you took a microscope, and you looked down, to the smallest of cells, that you could possibly see, well you would see, an intricate, amazing thing, put together, but you would also see, a place where Jesus Christ, is Lord and King.

Everywhere, everybody, all the time, Christ is King. Now this is, an enormous comfort, because it means, that I wonder, if we kind of clock this, that there is no such thing, as a secular space.

[12 : 41] We like to use that kind of language, secular spaces. We might imagine, that church is kind of, religious space, and then once we step out, we're kind of out, into the secular space. But they don't exist.

There's no such thing, as a secular space. Our offices, they're under the authority, of King Jesus. Our atheist friends, family and colleagues, they're subjects, of King Jesus.

We can never go anywhere, no matter how hard, we try, where Jesus Christ, is not Lord, and King. We'll come back to that, in the implications, when we close.

So that's the first, the King's, or Kingdom, all authority. The second, the King's command, all people, all nations, must obey.

So we've, we've begun to see, haven't we, the scope, in terms of, I suppose, geography, of where Jesus, of the Kingdom, of this King, but now, Jesus turns to the command. Have a look with me, at verse 19, and we're going to take, the next two alls, together.

[13 : 42] So verse 19, go therefore, and make disciples, of all nations, baptizing them, in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them, to observe all, that I have commanded you.

All disciples, teach them all things. The command is simple to understand, isn't it? Simple to understand, yet, obviously, mammoth in scope.

One commentator described these, as the most influential words, in human history, that these words, led to, essentially, what is Christianity today, and I think, he's probably right.

It is a easy command, to understand, but a mammoth command, in scope. But do we see, how clearly, this command, must be the command, that follows, given what we've just seen, about the scope, of Jesus's kingdom.

In other words, if Jesus really is king, in every place, over every person, then every single person, must be told, must be told, of the lordship, of their king, the Lord Jesus.

[14 : 52] Go and make disciples, of all nations, because in every single nation, under the sun, every single person, who has ever lived, does ever live, and will ever live, is under the authority, of king Jesus.

But it's more than just, to tell, isn't it? Because it's to go, and make disciples. Now disciples, just means followers. So it's not just, a case of, we're telling people, it's a case of, we need to make people, followers, of the lord Jesus.

In other words, people who know, what he says, and obey what he says. And it's striking again, but unsurprising, isn't it? That the command, is not just to go and tell, but the command, is to go and make disciples.

Because if Jesus, is king of all places, and king of all people, then Jesus demands, the obedience, of all people. All places, all people, command them, to obey all, that Jesus has taught.

And baptism, is a wonderful, illustration of that. Why baptism, at this point in time? Well baptism, is a symbol, a public declaration, of moving from, I am under one kingdom, to under the kingdom, of Jesus Christ.

[16 : 05] I have died, and I have been raised, in Jesus, and he is now my king. That's why baptism, is there. Now, an implication for us here, is that this command, is both, enormously freeing, and yet demanding.

Freeing, and yet demanding. I see some faces, looking at me like, how on earth is this freeing? But it's, it's freeing, because it does not matter, who you are, or where you are, from the boardroom, to the bedroom, office, to the orphanage, Britain, to Bangkok, you're in the kingdom, of Jesus Christ.

Now some of us here, won't be in Dulwich forever. I'm very upset about that, I won't speak to you, after you leave. But I would imagine, that in about 10 years time, not everyone, who's here this morning, will be here. And that's okay.

Isn't that liberating? It doesn't matter. It doesn't matter, if you go off, to the far reaches, of the Middle East, or just to a, just I don't know, Sevenoaks, whatever the case may be. There is absolutely, nothing sinful, about leaving.

Because wherever you go, Jesus Christ is Lord. And whoever you speak to, Jesus Christ, is their Lord. So anyone you are, from the school gate, to the offices, from your children, to your friends, doesn't matter.

[17 : 30] Jesus says, they're mine. Make disciples. But it's demanding, isn't it? It's freeing, anywhere, all the time. But it's demanding.

Because do we see, that this command, it is not optional. This command, is not optional. Jesus is king.

All people, are in his kingdom. And therefore, all people, must come under, the sound of the gospel, and obey. Where, and who, does not matter.

From little tots, to old totterers, all must hear. But they must hear. We cannot separate, the office, a time in our lives, some family members, or friends, or whoever it might be, from this command.

Where you are, right now, is where the Lord Jesus Christ, wants you, to make disciples. He is king. Your office, your home, your friendships, your family, he is king there too.

[18 : 34] And he wants them, as disciples. Jesus Christ, is Lord. Which means, again, this is comforting, isn't it? Because wherever you are, there is no hierarchy. It is not as though, ministry to our children, is somehow, lesser, than ministry to our friends, and colleagues.

It doesn't matter. But wherever you are, and whoever you before, Jesus Christ is king. Make disciples. Richard Wundbrandt, was a priest, in Romanian, occupied during, sorry, communist occupied Romania.

There you go. And he was put in prison, for a number of years, and tortured. And for two of those years, he was put in solitary confinement, in a cell that was six feet, by three feet. For two years.

And he never saw another soul, which the guard would slide the food, under the door. Two years. But then he, one day, after about a year, he heard some tapping, on the wall next to him. And he realized, that there was a prisoner, next to him trying to communicate.

Didn't know what the prisoner was saying. Didn't know Morse code, or anything like that. But painstakingly, month after month, the guy on the other side of the wall, taught him Morse code. Don't ask me how. Something like, one tap is an A, two taps is B.

[19 : 46] You can imagine how painstaking, this will become. And eventually, this priest, well, Richard, he learned Morse code. And what was the first thing, then, that he decided to do, after learning Morse code, is he tapped the gospel, back through the wall.

Why? Because even in the ministry of interior, in Romania, even in a cell underground, with no natural light, Jesus Christ is Lord. Jesus Christ demands, that he shares the gospel.

The man on the other side of the wall, through Morse code, repented, and then was led out of the cell, and Richard never heard from him again. But Jesus Christ is Lord, even in the cell, even at the school gate.

Final thought for us, the king's comfort, I am with you always. Of course, as we hear these commands, there's so many objections, that come up, isn't there?

Surely not me, I'm not an evangelist, or surely not now, this isn't the right time, surely not my workplace, I haven't got the gifts, I'm not godly enough, I haven't got the answers, fair.

[20 : 50] But here do we see, that the final clause, is one of great comfort for us, as we behold, what Jesus promises, those who are called, to obey his command, will have.

Have a look with me, at verse 20. And behold, I, that is Jesus, am with you, always, to the end of the age. Of course, again, logically this follows, doesn't it?

If Jesus Christ is king, of all places, and all people, at all times, then of course, he is with us, his people, at all times, and in all places.

The promise of Matthew 1, has been fulfilled, that Emmanuel was coming, but now it comes from the lips, of Jesus himself. I am God, I am king, I am with you, always.

Now it's worth pausing here, to think, yeah but, how is that actually, playing itself out, Jesus being with us, and does it actually, play itself out? Well I want us, to put ourselves back, into the shoes, of these initial disciples.

[21 : 54] This is 11 men, and imagine their task, 11 men, with the task of Jesus saying, okay listen, I'm going, sort of, I'm with you, but it is now your job, to convert the whole world.

And not only, are you to convert the whole world, but you need to convert them, with a message, of a Jewish crucified slave, on a piece of wood, who is king of the entire world. There's your message, nice and easy, off you go.

If we were there, what success rate, do we think, we would have given that, out of 100? It might be something to discuss, in your discussion groups afterwards. But do we see, that us sitting in this room, 2000 years later, speaking in a language, that didn't exist, when this command was given, speaking the words, of one of those 11 men, Matthew who was here, is testament to the fact, that the Lord Jesus Christ is king, and his message really is, going to the ends of the earth.

From 11 men, to 2000 years later, here in Dulwich, who would have thought, that we would have heard, Matthew's words in this language, today, now. But beyond us, the Joshua Project, which is a website, I thoroughly encourage you, to go and check out, if you've not heard of it, maps how the gospel, is reaching every single people group, on the face of the earth.

And 58% of the planet, that's over 4 billion people, have heard, or can hear, the gospel message, over 4 billion people. In other words, these 11 men, who were given a command, to take the message, of King Jesus, to the ends of the earth, their followers, number, in the billions, the billions.

[23 : 33] So is Jesus with them, and does his message work, and is his lordship true? Well, let's just look at what the disciples, have been able to achieve. Of course though, 42% of the globe, therefore, currently has no chance, currently, of hearing the gospel.

people, and perhaps, this would be wonderful, for us to talk about, in our groups, perhaps, for some of us here, us obeying this command, might mean, going there. It might.

My prayer is, that it would. I think it would be, a fantastic thing, if we were sending people out, to where the gospel, is not currently being preached. Regardless though, as we close, I want us to return, to a couple of implications, and then we will go, into discussion groups.

The first implication, is to return to that point, that we already mentioned, which is that, there are no sacred spaces. Often, the dialogue, will be something like, the fact that, the workplace, in particular, is kind of, separate to church life, and our religious life.

And it's very easy, for that to be the case, because there's pressures, and it's full of non-Christians, and it's a difficult place, to be a Christian. But can we see, that the command of Jesus, yeah, it's freeing, anywhere, all the time, but it is demanding.

[24 : 54] Your office, is just as much a part, of the lordship of Jesus, as everywhere else, including this room, including every beautiful cathedral, that you can think of.

Jesus Christ is Lord, and our colleagues, and our officers, need to hear it. In fact, that's why we're there, to make disciples. The second implication, is that this is not our work.

Jesus Christ is with us, it's his message, it's his kingdom, it's his power, and so whoever you are, wherever you are, Jesus is not going to tell you, to do something, that he will not empower you, to do, and be with you, to do.

I am with you, always, he says, to the end, of the earth. And third, do we see, and this is the kind of cheesy way, of putting it, it's go and then lo, as in lo, I am behold, with this KJV translation, but go and then lo.

In other words, we don't wait, to feel like Jesus is Lord, and we don't wait, to kind of get that opportunity, at work, we go, and behold, Jesus is with us, we hear, and respond, and go.

[26 : 06] That's the order, that we see here, go and make disciples, of all nations, I have all authority, go and make, I'm with you. That's the order, and the pattern. Why don't we close, in prayer, and then I'll hand over to John, to explain to us, what we'll do, in our discussion groups.

Thank you. Dear Lord, we thank you, that in all places, everywhere, at all times, Jesus Christ is Lord, and King. Please Lord, would you show us, what that means for us, as we live in your kingdom, under your Lordship.

And Father, we thank you so much, for this incredible comfort, that when we go out, into your world, you are with us always, to the end of the age. Amen.